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WRITER REVEALS CIA SECRETS, TRIUMPHS, FAILURES

/Article by Ruggero Orlando: "The CIA: the Most Powerful Intelligence Service"; Milan, Storia Illustrata, February 1972, pp 20-29/

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It's incredible, but the CIA came out of the revelations of the "McNamara Report" on Vietnam with a clean record.

That organization is mysterious and colossal, elusive and omnipresent, feared and smeared. It is surrounded by false and artfully circulated legends which serve as a smokescreen for truths which outdo romanticized inventions. It is described as the "juvenile delinquent of American foreign policy." Recently published secret reports on the war which has divided and torn the United States show that most of the time the CIA sided with the doves rather than with the hawks, thus showing distrust of the illusions held by government and military leaders concerning the possibility of victory. The CIA also opposed the bombing of North Vietnam, and brought about the conversion of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara which seriously disturbed President Johnson. This constitutes one of the psychological dramas of our era which is consistent with the popular, youthful revolt of the beatniks, the hippies, the intellectuals and the irregulars. It induced Lyndon Johnson to forego his candidacy for a second term. That revolt is still effectively and potentially at the heart of the American crisis.

It might be said that the CIA, organ of espionage and secret operations, would have preferred to go it alone in Southeast Asia in fighting a "personal war" as conceived and desired by John Kennedy. It was to be a war fought among the floating bars and homes of Saigon and the Mekong River with homemade bombs, dagger thrusts, about-faces and truces, with children used as couriers and beautiful women used to distract the adversary. The CIA would have preferred this rather than to reduce the rivalry with the communists to what the poet Auden called the "coarse and stupid event of battle."

We should not be surprised if the mysteries, the operations and failures of the CIA evoke literary references. The imagination is indispensable to understanding it, to guessing from what is inevitably leaked how much there is of truth and importance in the mess of financing, appointments, employees, secret and open agents, corpses. The late Democratic Senator Richard B. Russell, who was Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and supporter of the utmost secrecy regarding CIA activities, said in 1956: "It almost freezes the marrow of one's bones to hear what the agents of the United States are doing throughout the world." And Senator Leverett

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